



Mt. Shasta Mine Trail



FEATURES

Difficulty Level: Moderate
Length: 3.5 miles loop trail
Elevation: 540 feet elevation gain
Splendid wildflower display (best in late March)
Historic gold mines
Suitable for hikers, mountain bikers, and equestrians
This trail connects to Clear Creek Canal Trail

TRAILHEAD DIRECTIONS

Starting at the Whiskeytown Visitor Center, drive south on Kennedy Memorial Drive towards Whiskeytown Dam. The road forks. Take the left fork which becomes Paige Bar Road. Do not take the right fork over the dam. The trailhead and parking lot are about one mile farther on the left, across from Peltier Valley Road.

TRAIL DESCRIPTION

The trail is a loop and can be explored in either direction. This guide describes the trail in a counter clockwise direction, walking south, towards the cemetery.

Starting at the parking lot near the restroom, the trail is relatively flat for the first mile or so through a forest of primarily canyon live oaks and knobcone pines. White leaf manzanita, blueblossom ceanothus, and poison oak comprise much of the trailside brush.

Glimpses of Whiskeytown Cemetery, with its unusual grave markers, can be seen on the right.

This cemetery was relocated when the original was flooded with the creation of the lake in 1963.

Further on, the trail leads to several intersections with the Clear Creek Canal Trail. This trail follows the footprint of the Great Water Ditch, a 40 mile, man made ditch. Completed in 1855, the ditch was constructed for the purpose of supplying water to gold mines further south.

This portion of the trail traverses an area scorched by prescribed burns in 2003 and 2004. These precautionary measures remove the forest floor fuels that carry wildfires. The numerous



Bat gate at mine opening.

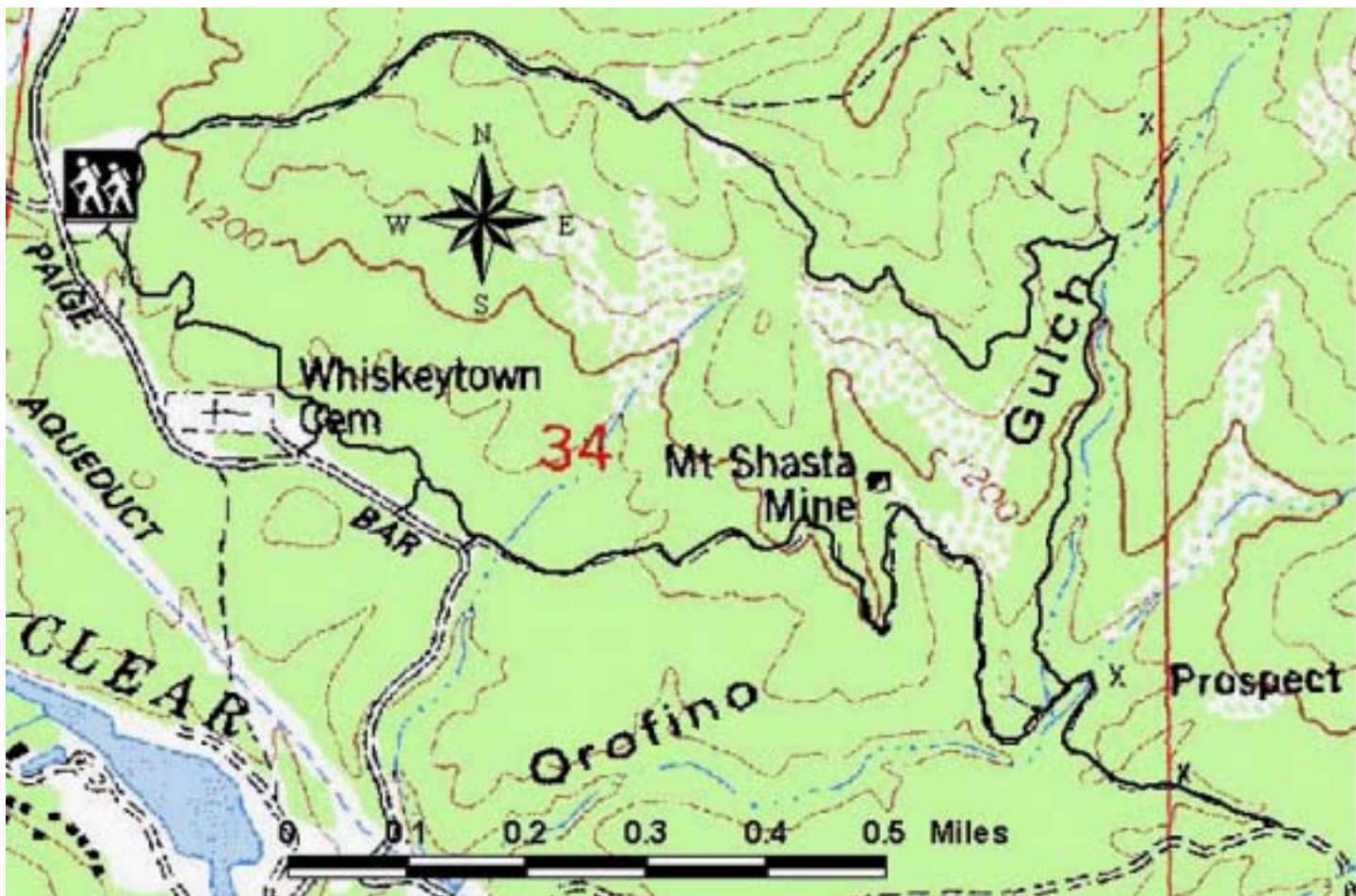
blackened tree trunks are mostly knobcone pines. Because of their shallow roots, they succumbed to high winds in 1997.

At about 1.5 miles, in the saddle of a drainage, a magnificent canyon

live oak stands sentry near the Mt. Shasta Mine. The mine is to the left, the entrance now sealed and fenced off. The original owners sold the mine for \$10,000 in 1897, probably to their regret! In the next 14 years, the greatly expanded mine produced \$178,000 in minerals from quartz ore. The ore was initially sent to the Keswick Smelter for crushing and processing. Around the turn of the century, a steam stamp mill was erected with a capacity of crushing 50 tons of ore a day. A sign at the entrance relates more information on the mine and its operation.

Continuing past the mine, look for a meadow behind a huge greenstone boulder on the left. In late March it is spectacular with yellow monkey flowers and blue dicks. Further on, the trail skirts Orofino Creek, passes the Monitor Mine, and then forks. The main trail is to the left. In springtime, a 100 foot side trip to the right is rewarded by a lovely waterfall and pool. Nearby are huge piles of quartz mine tailings.

Returning to the main trail, follow Orofino Creek upstream through trailside wildflowers of buttercups, shooting stars, pussy ears, and



Indian Warriors. A mine adit, (horizontal mine shaft) possibly the Ono Mine, is prominent on the left. The entrance gate is specifically designed to allow passage of bats and other wildlife while preventing human entrance.

The trail turns left and begins a steady uphill climb for the next 0.7 mile and passes through an oak and pine forest. Notice the mountains across the canyon from left to right: Kanaka Peak, South Fork Mountain, and Shasta Bally.

SAFETY

Do not enter any abandoned mine in the park. Structural integrity is unknown and hidden shafts may be loosely bridged with debris. Also snakes and other wildlife often inhabit these man made dens.

At the summit, the trail intersects Orofino fuel break road. From here, the trail overlooks Whiskeytown Lake, the dam and the Trinity Mountains in the distance. The trail descends to the trailhead and parking area, about a mile distant.

GEOLOGY

Mt. Shasta mine is on the edge of Orofino Gulch, a ravine cut through Mule Mountain stock. One geological theory holds that this stock is the remnant of a magma chamber, whose volcanic action 400 million years ago formed island arcs near what was then the continental shoreline. The emitted basalt, since metamorphosed, is called Copley greenstone.



Much later, volcanism liquefied minerals with low melting points. Gold and an impure type of quartz have similar low melting points, about 1,050° centigrade. Subterranean pressure then transported, concentrated, and squeezed the melt into fractures in the surrounding solid rock where it eventually froze.

In this manner, quartz and gold were emplaced in Orofino Gulch. Miners knew that where there were quartz veins, often there was gold. A century ago, more than a half-dozen gold mines were located along its banks.

